



# Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program

25 October 1985

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TO: Piping Plover Survey Cooperators

FROM: Scott Melvin, Natural Heritage Program, Massachusetts  
Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

SUBJECT: Summary of 1985 Massachusetts Piping Plover Survey

Over 30 observers reported a total of 191 pairs of breeding Piping Plovers (Charadrius melodus) in Massachusetts in 1985 (Table 1). Although this is 18 more pairs than were reported in 1984, we believe the apparent increase in 1985 was due to more intensive censuses at several sites rather than a real population increase statewide. Trends at individual sites varied, with increases reported from 19 sites and decreases at 9 sites.

Mammalian predation markedly reduced productivity at several sites, most notably Coast Guard Beach, Sandy Neck, and Cranes Beach. Limiting factors at other sites included flooding of nests during storms and high tides, human disturbance, off-road vehicles, and gull predation. Production at other locations was good; at Horseneck Beach, Harding's Beach, and Duxbury Beach 67% or more of the breeding pairs successfully raised young to fledging.

Cooperative research on Piping Plover population dynamics, habitat use, and management needs was initiated in 1985 by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, the Massachusetts Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, and the National Park Service. This study is already yielding important data that are essential to the conservation and management of the species in Massachusetts. Formal listing of the Piping Plover as a Federal threatened species is anticipated by November 1985.

Statewide totals of breeding American Oystercatchers (Haematopus palliatus) and Willets (Catoptrophorus semipalmatus) were not available for this report, however, censuses from several areas indicate a continued increase in numbers of both these shorebird species in Massachusetts.

Again this year we are grateful to all who contributed observations and census data on breeding Piping Plovers.

Table 1. Summary of estimated numbers of pairs of breeding Piping Plovers censused in Massachusetts, 1984 and 1985.

Location	No. pairs	
	1984	1985
Salisbury Beach, Salisbury	1	0
Parker River NWR	3	3
Plum Island State Park, Ipswich	2	1
Crane's Beach, Ipswich	3	5
Snake Island, Winthrop	0	0
Boston Harbor Islands	0	0
Third Cliff, Scituate	3	2
Fourth Cliff, Scituate	1	1
Duxbury Beach, Duxbury	1	3
Plymouth Beach, Plymouth	3	4
Stoney Point Dike, Wareham	2	nd <sup>a</sup>
Long Beach Point, Wareham	1	nd
West Island Beach, Fairhaven	2	2
Demerest-Lloyd State Park, Dartmouth	nd	0
Allens Pond/Little Beach/Barney's Joy, Dartmouth	3	4
Gooseberry Neck, Westport	nd	1
Horseneck Beach, Westport	4	6
Accaxet Beach, Westport	nd	2
Richmond Pond, Westport	2	3
Black Beach, Falmouth	1	nd
Washburn Island, Falmouth	1	nd
South Cape Beach, Mashpee	1	3
Town Beach, Sandwich	3	3
Springhill Beach, Sandwich	1	2
Scorton Creek, Sandwich	3	4
Sandy Neck, Barnstable	14	10
Dead Neck - Sampson's Island, Barnstable	3	2
Long Beach, Barnstable	2	2
Gray's Beach, Yarmouth	0	0
West Dennis Beach, Dennis	0	3

Table 1. Continued.

Location	No. pairs	
	1984	1985
Chapin Beach, Dennis	nd	0
Forest Beach, Chatham	0	0
Cockle Cove, Chatham	0	0
Harding's Beach, Chatham	2	3
Morris Island Dike, Chatham	1	2
Monomoy NWI, Chatham	3	5
North Beach, Chatham and Orleans	4	5
Nauset Heights, Orleans	2	2
New Island, Orleans and Eastham	1	1
First Encounter Beach - Nantasket Creek, Orleans and Eastham	0	nd
Coast Guard Beach, Eastham	5	12
Marconi Beach, Eastham	1	3
Indian Neck, Wellfleet	0	0
Jeremy Point, Wellfleet	nd	1
Pamet, Truro	2	0
Pilgrim Beach, Truro	1	nd
Beach Point, Truro	2	nd
French's (Exit 9), Provincetown	1	0
Race Point, Provincetown	1	0
Wood End Light, Provincetown	0	0
Naushon Island, Gosnold	0	nd
Weepecket Islands, Gosnold	0	nd
Great Island, Gosnold	nd	0
Pasque Island, Gosnold	3	4
Nashawena Island, Gosnold	1	1
Cuttyhunk Island, Gosnold	3	3
Penikese Island, Gosnold	0	nd
Martha's Vineyard	10	7
Noman's Land, Chilmark	0	0

Table 1. Continued.

Location	No. pairs	
	1984	1985
Nantucket	10	10
Whale Island	0	2
Tuckernuck Island	nd	2
Muskeget Island	0	2
Total	113	131

<sup>a</sup>nd = no data available